

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 14 and 32, cancel claims 53 and 54 and add new claims 55-60 so that the claims read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) An absorbent garment comprising:

a chassis having a body side surface and a garment side surface; and

an absorbent element connected to said garment side surface of said chassis at a first location and comprising a cover sheet having a first portion detachably connected to at least one of a second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at a second location, wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet are each formed on a first ~~an outer~~ surface of said cover sheet, said absorbent element comprising an absorbent material expandable from at least a first condition to a second condition, said absorbent material disposed adjacent a second surface of said cover sheet opposite said first surface, wherein said first portion of said cover sheet detaches from said at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at at least a portion of said second location when said absorbent material expands to said second condition.

Claim 2 (Cancelled).

3. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element is connected to said chassis at said first location with a primary bond, and wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said chassis at said second location with a secondary bond, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond.

4. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material has a first and second side, and further comprising a topsheet disposed

adjacent said first side of said absorbent material.

5. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said second location is positioned laterally outboard from said first location.

6. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent and wherein said first location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element.

7. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 6 wherein said second location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element in a parallel relationship with said first location.

8. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent, wherein said first location comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending primary locations, and wherein said second location comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary locations.

9. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said second location comprises a bonding region defined by a longitudinally extending length and a laterally extending width.

10. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 6 wherein said absorbent element comprises opposite ends, wherein at least one of said ends is connected to said chassis at said first location.

11. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 10 wherein said connection between said at least one of said ends of said absorbent element and said chassis at said first location is longitudinally spaced apart from said second location.

12. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material comprises a first fold having opposite side edges and a second and third fold attached to said opposite side edges of said first fold respectively and extending inwardly in an overlying relationship with said first fold.

13. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material comprises a plurality of disconnected layers.

14. (Withdrawn – currently amended) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent material is not directly attached to said cover sheet.

15. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said chassis comprises a top sheet and an extensible outer cover.

16. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said chassis comprises a front and back panel, and wherein said absorbent element connects said front and back panels.

Claim 17 (Cancelled).

18. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 4 wherein said topsheet is interfolded with said absorbent material.

19. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said second portion of said cover sheet.

20. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 19 wherein said first and

second portions of said cover sheet comprise overlying folds of said cover sheet.

21. (Withdrawn) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said chassis.

22. (Withdrawn) A method of absorbing exudates excreted from a user with an absorbent garment comprising:

- providing a chassis having a body side surface and a garment side surface and an absorbent element connected to said garment side surface of said chassis at a first location, said absorbent element comprising a cover sheet having a first portion detachably connected to at least one of a second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at a second location, wherein said absorbent element comprises an absorbent material and wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet are each formed on an outer surface of said cover sheet;

- securing said chassis to a body of the user;

- insulating said absorbent material with said exudates and thereby causing said absorbent material to expand; and

- disconnecting said first portion of said cover sheet from said at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at at least a portion of said second location as said absorbent material expands while maintaining said connection between said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis at said first location.

Claim 23 (Cancelled).

24. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element is connected to said chassis at said first location with a primary bond, and wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to at least one of said second portion of said cover sheet and said chassis at said second location with a secondary

bond, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent material has a first and second side, and further comprising a topsheet disposed adjacent said first side of said absorbent material.

26. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent and wherein said second location is positioned laterally outboard from said first location.

27. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 26 wherein said first location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element.

28. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27 wherein said second location extends longitudinally along at least a portion of said absorbent element in a parallel relationship with said first location.

29. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said absorbent element has a longitudinal extent, wherein said first location comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending first locations, and wherein said second location comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary locations.

30. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said second portion of said cover sheet.

31. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is detachably connected to said chassis.

32. (Currently Amended) A method of assembling an absorbent garment comprising:

providing a chassis having a body side surface and a garment side surface;
providing an absorbent element comprising an absorbent material and a cover sheet;

bonding said absorbent element with a primary bond to said garment side surface of said chassis at at least one primary bond region; and

bonding a first portion of said cover sheet to at least one of a second portion of said cover sheet and said garment side surface of said chassis with a secondary bond at at least one secondary bond region, wherein said secondary bond is weaker than said primary bond and wherein said first and second portions of said cover sheet are each formed on a first ~~an outer~~ surface of said cover sheet, and wherein said absorbent material is disposed adjacent a second surface of said cover sheet opposite said first surface.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said first and second bond regions are laterally spaced.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein at least one said primary bond region comprises a pair of laterally spaced, parallel and longitudinally extending primary bond regions, and wherein said at least one secondary bond region comprises a pair of laterally spaced secondary bond regions.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said absorbent material comprises a first fold having opposite side edges and a second and third fold attached to said opposite side edges of said first fold respectively and extending inwardly in an overlying relationship with said first fold.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 further comprising disposing a topsheet adjacent one side of said absorbent element.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said chassis comprises spaced apart front and back panels, and further comprising bonding said cover sheet of said absorbent element to a garment side surface of each of said front and back panels with said primary bond.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is bonded to said second portion of said cover sheet with said secondary bond at said at least one secondary bond region.

39. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 32 wherein said first portion of said cover sheet is bonded to said chassis with said secondary bond at said secondary bond region.

Claims 40-48 (Cancelled).

49. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element is fixedly, detachably connected to said garment side surface of said chassis at said first location.

50. (Previously Presented) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said absorbent element further comprises an outer cover disposed over said cover sheet.

51. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22 wherein said providing said absorbent element further comprises providing an outer cover disposed over said cover sheet.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein said providing said absorbent element further comprises providing an outer cover disposed over said cover sheet.

Claims 53-54 (Cancelled).

55. (New) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein said chassis comprises a front body panel and a rear body panel, each of said front and rear body panels comprising a waist portion, wherein said waist portions of said front and rear body panels are secured to define leg openings.

56. (New) The absorbent garment of claim 55 wherein said waist portions of said front and rear body panels are secured with releasable fasteners.

57. (New) The method of claim 32 wherein said chassis comprises a front body panel and a rear body panel each comprising a waist portion, wherein said waist portions of said front and rear body panels are securable to define leg openings.

58. (New) The absorbent garment of claim 57 wherein said waist portions of said front and rear body panels are securable with releasable fasteners.

59. (New) The absorbent garment of claim 1 wherein no portion of said absorbent element is secured to any portion of said bodyside surface of said body chassis.

60. (New) The absorbent garment of claim 32 wherein no portion of said absorbent element is secured to any portion of said bodyside surface of said body chassis